

SUGGESTED REMARKS

Robert E. Wuertz, USAID/P
Face-to-Face Workshops of the Philippine Global
Trade E-Learning Program
Focus on Trade Facilitation
October 2, 2006, 9:30 P.M.
Makati Sports Club (Salcedo Village)

(if present) Undersecretary Thomas Aquino,
Department of Trade and Industry,
Assistant Secretary Dita Angara-Mathay of the
Department of Trade and Industry,

Mr. Gao Pronove of Earth Council Geneva,

Mr. Vicente Paolo Yu of the South Centre,

Mr. Gil delos Reyes,

Ms. Gay Benueza,

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning.

On behalf of the U.S. Government, I thank the
organizers of this workshop, the Institute for
Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Earth
Council of Geneva, for bringing us all here
today to finally meet face-to-face. I would also
like to recognize the tireless support of the

Senior Undersecretary Tom Aquino and his staff at DTI, and personally congratulate them for the leadership and vision needed to get this program up and running to the point now where more than 400 participants have participated in the E-Learning Program.

For those of you who are here today, my special welcome and thanks. I am pleased to see so many people interested in learning more about trade. You represent an impressive, broad, cross-section of government, civil society, and academia, and each of you plays an important role in the Philippines' discussion on international trade policy. Even more impressive, this is only the tip of the iceberg - the real strength of the Global Trade E-Learning Program is the E-Learning, and that has extended to many more people than are here today.

Why is trade important? I think everyone has their own reasons for worrying about trade.

Evidence from a recent World Bank study¹ supports the view that trade openness leads to faster economic growth and significant poverty reduction in developing countries. That makes sense. Any time two economic actors make a deal, whether it is an export or import, it has to be good for both parties - otherwise, they wouldn't trade. This fundamental truth is simple yet powerful because it implies that trade is good, and more trade is better.

We also know that countries can become more competitive in international trade -- by lowering transaction costs, streamlining administrative and regulatory procedures, modernizing ports and customs operations, and widening the use of IT throughout the trading sectors of the economy.

These so-called "trade facilitation" efforts are at the forefront of the development policy debate, and are therefore also an important part

¹David Dollar, et. al., 2001.

of the WTO's Doha Development Agenda, and regional initiatives such as APEC.

And I am pleased to say that they also figure prominently on the Philippines reform agenda, and will be highlighted at the upcoming National Competitiveness Summit.

Finally, I would like to conclude by saying once again that USAID is pleased to be able to support the Philippine Global Trade e-Learning Program. I congratulate each and every one of you on your enthusiasm and your achievement.

Thank you and good day.